

“Love, The Most Excellent Way,” Part 4 - 1 Corinthians 13:11-13 – January 24th, 2016

- Today's teaching is part four of a series I've titled, "Love, The Most Excellent Way."
- Up to this point the Apostle Paul has put his emphasis on the Corinthians overemphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit over love.
- As such, he now turns a corner of sorts so as to illustrate how that the gifts are only temporary while love will last for all eternity.
- It's important to note that the two illustrations he uses in verses eleven and twelve serve to reinforce the truth in verse thirteen.
- Namely, when Jesus, as the personification of perfection and love comes, we will have no need for that which is needed now.
- This because, all the gifts of the Holy Spirit will have served their purpose such that they pointed to that which would fulfill them.
- I think of the 7 Feasts of God for Israel, which all prophetically point to the person of Jesus Christ, Who ultimately fulfills them.
- Like the gifts they are appointed times for a time in the sense that they serve their purpose in pointing us to our final destination.
- Enter the Apostle Paul's illustration's in the text before us today, where by the Holy Spirit, he seeks to redirect our eternal focus.
- v11 Paul says as a child one talks thinks and reasons like a child, but when a man, they put the ways of childhood behind them.
- v12 He says now we see a reflection in a mirror, but then we'll see Him face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully.
- v13 Paul concludes by telling them that now, the three that remain are faith, hope and love, but the greatest of all these is love.
- Doubtless you have heard that famous quip about how Christians can be so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good.
- While I certainly understand the reasoning behind such an assertion, I'm of the belief it's really the exact opposite that's true.
- Actually, this is what Paul is saying here to the Corinthian Christians; "you are so earthly minded you're of no heavenly good."
- It's for this reason he uses the illustrations of leaving the things of childhood, which are temporary, for the things of manhood.
- It's also for this reason he uses the illustration of seeing a blurry reflection temporarily, as opposed to seeing Jesus face to face.
- Just as our childhood and a blurred and dim image in the mirror temporary, so too are the gifts of the Holy Spirit also temporary.
- Of this one commentator wrote, "Childish things are appropriate for children, and the gifts are appropriate for our present time. But the gifts of the Holy Spirit will not be appropriate forever. ...Paul is not trying to say that if we are spiritually mature, we will not need spiritual gifts. But he does say that if we are spiritually mature, we will not over-emphasize spiritual gifts, especially at the expense of love."
- I suppose you could say that Paul is wanting for them to renew their minds and focus their attention on that which is for eternity.
- If you were to ask me what I thought was one of the greatest difficulties in a Christian's life, this would be at the top of the list.
- More specifically, the difficulty of us allowing our lives here in this world to eclipse what awaits us in our lives for all of eternity.
- Colossians 3:1-4 (NIV) — 1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.
- Isaiah 26:3-4 (NIV - 3 You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you. 4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD himself, is the Rock eternal.
- Philippians 4:6-8 (NIV) —6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.
- Proverbs 23:7a (NKJV) — 7 For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.
- Romans 12:1-2 - 1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
- The common denominator with all these verses is they speak to the paramount importance of thinking on and living for eternity.
- The pages of Holy Writ are replete with both the promises and blessings to those who will but live their lives in light of eternity.
- But we have no hope of living our lives and realizing these blessings, absent the Holy Spirit enabling us to be heavenly minded.
- I would submit that this is exactly what Paul is saying in verse thirteen about love being the greater of three faith hope and love.
- If you really think about it, we won't have any need for faith in heaven, because we are going to be with Jesus for all of eternity.
- Moreover, neither will we have any need for hope in heaven, this by virtue of the fact that we'll be with the one our hope was in.
- Charles Spurgeon - "The streets of gold will have small attraction to us, the harps of angels will but slightly enchant us, compared with the King in the midst of the throne. He it is who shall rivet our gaze, absorb our thoughts, enchain our affection, and move all our sacred passions to their highest pitch of celestial ardour. We shall see Jesus."
- In closing, I'm hoping you'll kindly allow me to pose two questions for us to consider. Please know I ask them of myself as well.
- First, could the hopelessness and faithlessness that's taken up residence in my life be due to the focus of my life here on earth?
- Secondly, do I really believe were I to absorb my thoughts on Jesus, it could change my life in both the temporal and eternal?